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SUBJECT: MEDIA WRAP-UP: DPRK'S NUCLEAR TEST, UNEASE WITH RUSSIA AND  
CLIMATE CHANGE. OCTOBER 13, 2006

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Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (SBU) Three major stories emerged this week: North Korea's nuclear test, fallout and international reactions to the slaying of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya and western criticism of Putin's regime, and commentary on Al Gore's documentary film on climate change. French media unequivocally saw the DPRK's nuclear test as a symptom of Western diplomatic failure and warned of the dangers of nuclear proliferation. (Note: North Korea is also set to dominate discussion on upcoming weekend (10/14-15) talk shows. End Note.) In commentaries denouncing the murder of Russian human rights activist and journalist Anna Politkovskaya, French media decried the West's complacency vis-a-vis Putin. France's position on the Kyoto Protocol and previous criticism of the U.S. as the "world's number one polluter" served as the background for positive portrayals of former Vice President Al Gore's political/environmental documentary. End Summary.

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DPRK'S NUCLEAR TEST -- WEST STYMIED  
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¶2. (SBU) With the Iranian nuclear crisis still very much unresolved, French media were quick to fault the six-way talks, describing the current crisis as a "setback for the U.S. President," a "diplomatic fiasco" for China and a "major slap in the face for the West in general." Right-of-center Le Figaro's editorial suggested that North Korea's test would serve as a "green light" for Tehran, while left-wing Liberation asked, "After North Korea, Iran?" Researcher Therese Delpeche argued in right-of-center Le Figaro that "instead of one nuclear crisis we now have two." At the start of the week, left-of-center Le Monde mused skeptically that China could resolve its dilemma only by imposing sanctions on its "principal ally," but modified its editorial line over the course of the week to acknowledge that Beijing was "ready to sanction" Pyongyang. Most commentators agreed that, because North Korea was already so isolated, "imposing sanctions would be ineffective." Nevertheless, government-run FR2 television sympathetically described the U.S. as seeking "sanctions that would hurt, really hurt." The more pessimistic among the commentators declared that non-proliferation "had failed," raising concerns of a "worldwide network of nuclear dissemination" through a "domino effect." Reports uniformly faulted North Korea for its "megalomania" while suggesting that its message

"may be one more call for a dialogue with the U.S." Catholic La Croix reported that "France's entire political class condemned the test, albeit in different words."

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MEDIA CRITICIZES WEST'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS PUTIN  
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¶3. (SBU) French media outlets used the occasion of Russian human rights activist and journalist Anna Politkovskaya's murder to pen a number of opinion pieces asking "whether her death was politically motivated" and pointedly criticizing Putin's regime. Right-of-center Le Figaro described Politkovskaya as "Russia's conscience" while left-of center Le Monde asked whether "her death would serve as a wake up call for European leaders." Commentators and political leaders spoke out against "Putin's public relations" campaign during the recent July G-8 summit in St. Petersburg. Parliamentarian Pierre Lellouche (UMP) criticized "France's benevolence towards Russia, an aggressive and hostile nation." Left-wing Liberation intoned that "although Putin may have been a mere spectator, he was responsible for setting the stage for [Russia's] 'theatre of crime.'"

¶4. (SBU) French media insisted that Putin's visit to Germany, originally scheduled to discuss energy cooperation issues, took on a "more political turn" because of the Russian journalist's murder. French media linked Politkovskaya's murder to ongoing concerns about Russia's "state-run capitalism," especially in regard to energy issues. Editorials linked Russian attempts to renegotiate drilling licenses previously issued to European oil companies operating in Russia, the controversial pipeline crossing Iran and the Middle East, as well as the Russian purchases shares in EADS, the parent company of Airbus to concerns about rule-of-law in Putin's Russia. Right-of-center economic daily Les Echos characterized Putin's efforts as "seeking to implement a completely asymmetric economic relationship with Europe." "France cannot just have trade agreements with Russia, it must demand that principles be respected," proclaimed France's Socialist Party, requesting that

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"President Chirac ask for an explanation."

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CLIMATE CHANGE: FRENCH AGREE WITH DOCUMENTARY  
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¶5. (SBU) Left-of-center Le Monde, which carried an interview with former Vice President Gore in which he declared that the U.S. "will sign the Kyoto protocol," editorialized on the "curious paradox of a former Vice President from the world's most polluting nation" coming to France to elicit interest in climate change from parliamentarians. Left-wing Liberation argued that Gore's "message was all the more pertinent because it came from the former Vice President of a nation which refused to sign the Kyoto protocol." Left-of-center Le Monde described the initiatives to reduce emissions by 300 U.S. mayors and governors as "more in line with Al Gore than President Bush" and noted the local leaders have decided to act "on their own." Government-run FR2 television claimed that "since Katrina, Americans have changed their attitude towards climate change." Significantly, Gore also was the guest of leading Europe-1 radio interviewer Jean-Pierre Elkabbach. Elkabbach rarely invites non-French speakers for his morning drive-time 10-minute segment.  
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